

A SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Book Seven

HOLINESS, SANCTIFICATION, AND SELF-EXAMINATION

Walking in the Covenant After Conversion

*"But as he which hath called you is holy,
so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;"*

1 Peter 1:15

Established Upon the Authority of Holy Scripture

King James Version

Preface: After Conversion, Then What?

Books Four through Six established what a person must do to be saved: repent, be baptized in Jesus' name, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Book Seven addresses the question that inevitably follows: having entered the covenant, how is it lived?

The answer is holiness. Not as a secondary concern, not as an optional pursuit for the especially devout, but as the standing requirement of the New Covenant — the very nature of the God the believer now belongs to, expressed in the life of the one who belongs to him. The New Covenant does not lower the standard of God's holiness. It provides the power — through the indwelling Spirit — to actually meet it.

This book treats two inseparable subjects together:

- Holiness and sanctification: what God's standard is, what the Spirit enables, and what walking in the covenant actually requires across every dimension of life.
- Obedience and self-examination: the danger of self-deception, the mandate to test what one believes and how one lives against the written Word, and the two errors — legalism and antinomianism — that bracket the narrow road of genuine covenant obedience. These subjects belong together because holiness without self-examination produces pride, and self-examination without the standard of holiness produces either despair or complacency. Together they produce the sober, joyful, humble walk that the New Testament consistently commends.

The Continuity of Parts Four Through Seven

Book Four: what to do to be saved. Book Five: baptism in detail. Book Six: the Holy Ghost in detail. Book Seven: what the saved life looks like from that point forward. These four books form a complete unit on the full gospel and its outworking. None of them stands alone without the others.

Part One: Holiness and Sanctification

Chapter One: The Standard — God's Own Character

The standard of holiness in the New Covenant is not a list of rules assembled by ecclesiastical councils. It is the character of God himself. This is the starting point from which everything else in this book flows. Holiness is required because God is holy. And holiness is possible — in the only way it has ever been possible for human beings — because God himself provides the means.

1.1 The Unchanging Holiness of God

Leviticus 11:44

"For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy."

1 Peter 1:15--16

"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

Peter quotes Leviticus in his New Covenant epistle. This is not incidental. He is making the point explicitly: the standard has not changed. The God who called Israel to holiness under Moses is the same God who calls believers to holiness under Christ. The covenant has changed — the power and the basis of access have changed — but the character of the God the covenant points to has not moved by a single degree.

The Hebrew word translated holy is *qodesh* (קֹדֶשׁ) — separation, otherness, consecration. To be holy is to be set apart from what is common and devoted to what is sacred. Applied to God, holiness is his absolute moral perfection and his total otherness from everything created. Applied to the believer, holiness is the progressive conformity of the believer's character to that moral perfection — a participation in God's own nature through the Spirit's indwelling.

2 Peter 1:4

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Peter's language is remarkable: partakers of the divine nature. This is not metaphorical enthusiasm. The New Covenant provides actual participation in the nature of God — through the indwelling Spirit who is the Spirit of the

holy God. The believer does not merely admire God's holiness from a distance; he becomes a vessel through which the holy God expresses his character in the world.

1.2 Holiness Is Not Optional

Hebrews 12:14

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

The Greek word translated 'follow' is *dioko* (διώκω) — to pursue earnestly, to press after, to chase. It is the same word used for the persecutor pursuing his victims. Holiness is not a state that arrives automatically after conversion; it is something to be pursued with the urgency and intentionality of a hunter after prey. The believer who is not actively pursuing holiness is not in neutral; he is drifting in the wrong direction.

The consequence stated in Hebrews 12:14 is absolute: without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. Not 'will see the Lord less fully.' Not 'will enter a lesser category of the Kingdom.' No man shall see the Lord.

Holiness is not a category of advanced Christian experience for the spiritually ambitious. It is the requirement for entrance into the presence of God.

1 Thessalonians 4:3

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification."

Paul does not say sanctification is the will of God for some believers, or the will of God for those who seek the deeper life. He says it is the will of God — stated without qualification, without exception, without limitation. The minister who assures a congregation that they are right with God while they live in ongoing, unaddressed unholiness is not assuring them of what God's own declared will affirms.

1.3 What Changed at Pentecost

The standard of holiness did not change at Pentecost. What changed was the power available to meet it. Under the Old Covenant, the law was external — written on tablets of stone, demanding obedience from the outside. The history of Israel is the sustained record of what happens when human nature attempts to meet a divine standard by external compulsion alone: failure, compromise, idolatry, and exile.

Ezekiel 36:26--27

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

God's promise through Ezekiel is precisely what Pentecost delivered: the Spirit placed within the believer, causing him to walk in God's statutes. Not demanding. Not compelling by external threat. Causing — from within, through the regenerate nature the Spirit produces, through the law written on the heart rather than on stone.

This is the New Covenant's distinctive provision: not a lower standard, but a higher power. The believer who has received the Holy Ghost is not in the same position as an Old Covenant Israelite straining against external law. He has a new nature — born of the Spirit — that is oriented toward God's character from the inside. Holiness, for the Spirit-filled believer, is not an alien imposition. It is the expression of who he has become.

The New Covenant's Distinction

Old Covenant: the law demands holiness from without. New Covenant: the Spirit produces holiness from within. The standard is the same. The mechanism is utterly different. This is why Paul can say that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in

us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit (Romans 8:4).

Chapter Two: What Holiness Covers

Holiness is not a single category of behavior. It covers the whole person — speech, thought, conduct, relationships, and the posture of the heart before God. This chapter works through the dimensions of holiness the New Testament addresses, establishing the scope of what the standard requires.

2.1 Holiness of Speech

Ephesians 4:29

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

James 3:10

"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

Speech is the most immediate and most frequent expression of the interior state of the heart. Christ stated the principle: 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh' (Matthew 12:34). The mouth does not lie about the heart for long. A believer whose speech is routinely corrupt — in the sense of destructive, dishonest, sexually coarse, contemptuous, or dishonoring — has a heart condition, not merely a language habit.

Paul's standard in Ephesians 4:29 is not merely the absence of profanity. It is the positive standard: speech that is good to the use of edifying, that ministers grace to the hearer. Every use of speech is to be evaluated against this standard. Does what I am about to say build up or tear down? Does it minister grace or administer harm? The standard is active and demanding, not merely passive avoidance.

2.2 Holiness of Thought

Philippians 4:8

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

2 Corinthians 10:5

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The mind is the battlefield of sanctification. What enters and dwells in the mind shapes the affections, and the affections shape the will, and the will produces conduct. A believer who fills his mind with what is impure, violent, covetous, or dishonoring to God is cultivating the soil from which impure, violent, covetous, and dishonoring conduct will grow.

Paul's instruction in Philippians 4:8 is not a passive suggestion; it is an active command: think on these things.

Second Corinthians 10:5 goes further: bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. The standard of holiness applies not only to what a believer does but to what he allows himself to contemplate. A thought life that is ungoverned is a life in which holiness is partial at best.

2.3 Holiness of Conduct

1 Thessalonians 5:22

"Abstain from all appearance of evil."

Romans 12:1--2

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Paul's call to present the body as a living sacrifice is the most comprehensive New Testament statement on holiness of conduct. The body — the whole physical life, with all its appetites, habits, and patterns of behavior — is to be presented to God as a holy, living sacrifice. Not offered once and done. Living — a continuous, sustained offering that is renewed daily.

The contrast is explicit: not conformed to this world, but transformed.

The Greek *synschematizesthe* (συνσχηματίζεσθε) for 'conformed' means to be pressed into the mold of this age — shaped by the patterns, values, and assumptions of the surrounding culture. The Greek *metamorphousthe* (μεταμορφοῦσθε) for 'transformed' is the word from which we get metamorphosis — a change not of surface but of substance, from within.

Holiness of conduct is not the adjustment of external behavior to meet a religious code; it is the outward expression of an inward transformation.

The scope of conduct holiness in the New Testament covers:

- Sexual purity — fornication, adultery, and all sexual immorality explicitly condemned (1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)
- Sobriety — drunkenness condemned, the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 5:18)
- Honesty and integrity — the believer's word to be trustworthy, deceit incompatible with the new nature (Colossians 3:9; Ephesians 4:25)
- Humility and meekness — the character of Christ himself as the standard (Philippians 2:3-5; Matthew 11:29)
- Generosity and care for others — the love commandment expressed in concrete action (1 John 3:17-18; Galatians 6:10)

2.4 Holiness and Separation from the World

2 Corinthians 6:17

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

1 John 2:15--16

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Separation from the world is not withdrawal from human society. It is the refusal to be conformed to the world's values, priorities, and patterns. The believer lives in the world as an ambassador of another Kingdom — present, engaged, and caring, but not belonging, not shaped, not ultimately oriented toward what the world offers.

John's statement is absolute: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. The heart has a limited capacity for ultimate loyalty. What occupies the place of highest desire determines the direction of the whole life. A heart fully oriented toward God cannot simultaneously be fully oriented toward what the world values — its pleasures, its status, its accumulation of things. The New Testament does not suggest a balanced portfolio of worldly and heavenly affections. It calls for a decisive orientation: toward God, away from the world's competing claims on ultimate allegiance.

Chapter Three: Progressive Sanctification — Growth Is Expected

Sanctification is both positional and progressive. The believer is declared holy in Christ at the moment of new birth (1 Corinthians 6:11 — 'ye are

sanctified'). And the believer is simultaneously commanded to grow in holiness throughout the Christian life (2 Corinthians 7:1 — 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God'). Both are simultaneously true.

Neither cancels the other.

3.1 Declared Holy and Commanded to Grow

1 Corinthians 6:11

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

2 Corinthians 7:1

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The past tense of 1 Corinthians 6:11 ('ye are washed, ye are sanctified') and the present progressive of 2 Corinthians 7:1 ('perfecting holiness') describe two aspects of one reality. At new birth, the believer receives the positional declaration of holiness — he is set apart, placed in Christ, covered by his righteousness.

Simultaneously, the process of becoming in character and conduct what he has been declared to be in position begins and must continue until death or the return of Christ.

This dual reality has important pastoral implications. The minister who emphasizes only the positional declaration produces a congregation that feels permanently secure regardless of how they live. The minister who emphasizes only the progressive command produces a congregation in perpetual anxiety about whether they have grown enough. Both the declaration and the command must be preached with equal weight and equal clarity.

3.2 Growth Is Expected — Stagnation Is a Warning Sign

2 Peter 1:5--8

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Peter's chain of virtues is not a description of the instantaneous result of conversion. It is a description of the trajectory of the sanctified life — each virtue added to and building upon the previous, in a progressive accumulation of Christlikeness. The key word is abound: not merely present but increasing. Growth is the expected direction. A believer who is the same in character and conduct three years after conversion as on the day of their new birth has not stagnated spiritually; they have declined — because the environment of the Christian life applies pressures that either produce growth or produce compromise.

Peter continues in verse 9: 'But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.' The absence of growth is not described as a spiritual plateau. It is described as blindness and forgetfulness. The believer who is not growing has lost sight of what they were and what Christ did to bring them out of it.

3.3 The Fruit of the Spirit as the Measure

Galatians 5:22--23

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Paul's list of the Spirit's fruit is the New Testament's portrait of what the sanctified character looks like in practice. Nine qualities — not nine separate spiritual gifts distributed among different believers, but nine characteristics of the one fruit that the Spirit produces in every Spirit-filled believer who is walking in the Spirit. The word 'fruit' is singular: one fruit with nine facets, not nine optional extras.

The fruit of the Spirit is not self-generated virtue. It is not the result of trying harder to be more loving, more patient, more gentle. It is the natural produce of a life that is rooted in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25). Just as a healthy fruit tree does not struggle to produce fruit — it produces fruit because of what it is and where it is rooted — the Spirit-filled believer who is abiding in Christ produces the Spirit's fruit because of the life that flows from within.

The practical question for self-examination is not 'Have I achieved these qualities?' but 'Are these qualities growing in me?' Is there more love in my life this year than last? Is patience more present, gentleness more consistent, self-control more reliable? The direction of travel is the measure, not the distance yet to cover.

Chapter Four: Grace Does Not Cancel Holiness

The relationship between grace and holiness is one of the most misunderstood and most consequential questions in practical Christian theology. On one side stands antinomianism: the error that grace eliminates the obligation to obey. On the other stands legalism: the error that obedience earns or maintains grace. Both are wrong. Both produce destructive fruit. The New Testament holds a precise and demanding position between them.

4.1 The Antinomian Error

Romans 6:1--2

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

Paul's 'God forbid' — the Greek *me genoito* (μὴ γένοιτο), literally 'may it never be,' the strongest negation available in Greek — is the apostolic response to the suggestion that grace creates license. The logic of antinomianism is: more sin produces more grace, therefore sin is spiritually productive. Paul treats this not as a theological error to be gently corrected but as an outrage to be forcefully rejected.

His answer is not merely 'that would be wrong' — it is 'that is impossible for the person who has genuinely entered the covenant.' How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Genuine new birth produces a fundamental reorientation of the believer's nature toward God and away from sin. A person who uses grace as cover for continued, unrepentant sin has not understood grace. More significantly, they may not have received it.

A congregation taught that grace removes the obligation to walk in holiness will produce the fruit of that teaching. The pastor who never preaches the demands of the covenant because he fears appearing legalistic has not protected his congregation from legalism; he has exposed them to its opposite — which is equally deadly.

4.2 The Legalist Error

Galatians 2:21

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Galatians 5:4

"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

The legalist error is the mirror image of antinomianism. Where antinomianism says grace eliminates obligation, legalism says obligation

earns grace. The person who believes their obedience is contributing to their standing before God — that their holiness is purchasing something from God — has misunderstood both grace and holiness entirely.

Paul's statement in Galatians 5:4 is among the strongest in all of Scripture: those who seek justification by law have fallen from grace.

Not drifted. Fallen. The attempt to stand before God on the basis of one's own law-keeping is not a slightly inferior approach to salvation; it is a departure from the covenant altogether. Grace received through obedience and grace earned through obedience are not the same thing. The first is the New Testament's pattern. The second is its antithesis.

Antinomianism: Grace means no obligation to obey |

Legalism: Obedience earns or maintains grace

Both errors produce the same practical result in opposite directions: the antinomian lives without the constraint of God's standard; the legalist lives without the freedom of God's grace. Both are impoverished. The New Testament's position is precise: grace is entirely unearned, but its reception is through appointed means of obedience; and the obedient life that follows conversion is not payment for grace received but the fruit of the Spirit who now indwells the obedient believer.

4.3 Grace Instructs

Titus 2:11--12

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Paul's description of grace as teaching is decisive. Grace is not passive. It is not merely the removal of condemnation. It is an active, instructing force that produces specific character in the believer who has received it. Grace teaches denial of ungodliness — the active refusal of what is contrary to

God's character. Grace teaches sober, righteous, godly living. The grace that does not produce these things is not Paul's grace.

The standard Paul describes in Titus 2:12 is not a relaxed one. Sobriety means clear-headed, self-controlled, undistorted by passion or appetite.

Righteousness means right conduct in every relationship and transaction.

Godliness means the orientation of the whole life toward God. These are not advanced virtues for the spiritually mature; they are the basic description of what a life shaped by genuine grace looks like.

Part Two: Obedience and Self-Examination

Chapter Five: The Danger of Self-Deception

Of all the warnings in the New Testament, none is more sobering than the warning against self-deception in spiritual matters. A person can be sincerely mistaken about their standing before God. A person can be morally earnest, religiously active, spiritually confident, and entirely wrong — not because they intended to deceive themselves, but because they built on a foundation that sounded right and was not.

5.1 The Warning from Christ's Own Lips

Matthew 7:21--23

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Three features of this passage demand sustained attention:

1. The number: 'many.' Christ does not say 'a few at the fringes' will be surprised. He says many — a multitude of people who were confident of their standing before him.
2. The credentials: these are not obviously apostate people. They prophesied in his name. They cast out devils in his name. They performed wonderful works in his name. These are people with active, apparently successful religious ministries conducted in Jesus' name.
3. The verdict: 'I never knew you.' Not 'I knew you once but you drifted.' Never. The relationship they believed existed had not, in the terms Christ uses, ever been a true relationship at all. And the cause: they worked iniquity — lawlessness, anomia (ἀνομία) — while believing themselves to be in right standing. The implication for the teacher is severe. A person can be active in ministry, confident of their salvation, capable of producing apparently supernatural results, and yet be building on sand — unknown to Christ because the foundation of genuine covenant obedience — Acts 2:38 obeyed, the Spirit genuinely received, the life genuinely walking in holiness — was never actually there. Sincerity does not substitute for foundation. Activity does not substitute for obedience.

The Criterion Christ Uses

The distinction between those who enter and those who are turned away is not prophetic activity, miracle-working, or religious confidence. It is: doing the will of the Father. And the will of the Father is not obscure. It is written in the New Testament and summarized in Acts 2:38. The question is whether a person has actually done it — not whether they believed they had.

5.2 The Light That Is Darkness

Luke 11:34--35

"The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is

evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness."

Christ's warning about the light within being darkness is among the most penetrating statements in the Gospels. It is possible to possess what one believes to be spiritual illumination — doctrinal conviction, a sense of calling, years of accumulated teaching, a community of people who confirm one's perspective — while that illumination is, in fact, darkness. Not just incomplete light. Darkness.

The self-deceived person does not know they are deceived. That is the nature of self-deception. The person who is in genuine spiritual darkness and knows it is not self-deceived; they are merely lost and can be found. The person who is in darkness and believes it to be light is in the more dangerous position, because they have no sense of need and therefore no impulse to seek what would correct them.

The antidote Christ implies is the single eye — the undivided, honest orientation of the whole person toward truth, toward the light of Scripture, toward the willingness to have one's confident assumptions tested. The person whose eye is single — who genuinely wants to know the truth regardless of what it costs them — is protected from the worst forms of self-deception. The person who only wants confirmation of what they already believe is in permanent danger of the light within being darkness.

Chapter Six: The Mandate of Self-Examination

6.1 Paul's Command to the Church

2 Corinthians 13:5

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Paul's command is addressed to a church — a community of people who already believe themselves to be in Christ. He is not addressing unbelievers or those on the fringe of faith. He is addressing the congregation at Corinth and telling them to examine themselves as to whether they are genuinely in the faith. The possibility that the answer might be no is left open by the phrase 'except ye be reprobates' — the exception that proves the rule is not certainty but honest examination.

Two Greek words carry the weight of Paul's command:

- Peirazo (πειράζω) — to test, to examine, to put to the proof. This is an active, rigorous testing, not a casual self-assessment.
- Dokimazo (δοκιμάζω) — to prove by testing, to assay as a refiner tests metal. The image is of a metallurgist applying fire to determine the genuine quality and purity of a substance. Paul calls for both. The believer is to actively test and rigorously assay their own faith against the standard of Scripture. Not once, not at conversion only, but as an ongoing discipline of the Christian life. The congregation that never self-examines is not a congregation at rest; it is a congregation in danger.

6.2 What Self-Examination Tests

Self-examination in the New Testament is not an exercise in introspective anxiety. It has specific content — specific questions the believer is to put to themselves against specific scriptural standards:

The Foundation: Have I Obeyed Acts 2:38?

The first and most basic question of self-examination is whether the foundation of salvation has been genuinely laid. Have I genuinely repented? Was I baptized in Jesus' name by immersion? Have I received the gift of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of tongues? If the answer to any of these is uncertain or no, the foundation requires attention before the superstructure can stand.

The Fruit: Is the Spirit's Fruit Growing?

The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) is the practical measure of sanctification. Is love for God and for people genuinely present and growing? Is there increasing patience, gentleness, self-control? Or are the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) more consistently present than the fruit of the Spirit? The honest answer to these questions is the honest answer about the state of the walk with God.

The Direction: Am I Moving Toward God or Away?

The Christian life has direction. The believer is either pressing toward the mark (Philippians 3:14) or drifting from it (Hebrews 2:1). The question of direction is more important than the question of distance: a person still far from the standard but moving toward it is in a better position than a person who once stood closer and is now moving away.

Self-examination asks: which direction am I moving?

The Interior: Is My Heart's Orientation Toward God?

1 John 3:20--21

*"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart,
and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not,
then have we confidence toward God."*

John's standard for confidence before God is the interior state of the heart. The heart that is genuinely oriented toward God, genuinely seeking to walk in his ways, genuinely grieving over failure and returning to repentance — that heart has confidence. The heart that is hardened, that has ceased to be grieved by sin, that has accommodated compromise as the new normal — that heart is condemning itself and the condemnation is accurate.

6.3 Self-Examination Is Not Morbid Anxiety

The mandate of self-examination is not a call to permanent spiritual insecurity. Paul's instruction in 2 Corinthians 13:5 is not designed to

produce a congregation in perpetual doubt about their salvation. It is designed to produce a congregation in honest, clear-eyed knowledge of where they actually stand — so that what needs correcting can be corrected, and what is genuinely present can be genuinely celebrated.

1 John 5:13

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

John's explicit purpose in writing 1 John is that believers may know they have eternal life. Not hope vaguely. Not feel tentatively. Know.

The assurance of salvation is available to the believer who is walking honestly in the covenant, and John's epistle provides the specific markers by which that assurance is grounded in reality rather than sentiment. Self-examination done rightly does not produce anxiety; it produces the grounded, tested confidence of a person who has honestly assessed their standing and found it, by God's grace, solid.

The Goal of Self-Examination

Not paralysis. Not perpetual doubt. But the sober, clear-eyed honesty of a person who knows where they are, knows what God requires, and is walking in the direction of meeting it — by the Spirit's power, through the covenant means God appointed.

Chapter Seven: Obedience as Response, Not Payment

The most critical distinction in the practical theology of the Christian life is the distinction between obedience as response to grace and obedience as payment for grace. These look superficially similar — both involve a person doing what God commands — but they arise from entirely different motivations, they produce entirely different fruits, and they stand in entirely different relationships to the gospel.

7.1 The Motivation That Determines the Nature

Obedience motivated by love and gratitude — the response of a heart that has received grace it knows it did not deserve and cannot repay — is the New Testament's pattern of covenant obedience. It does not obey to earn; it obeys because it has received. It does not obey to stay safe; it obeys because its nature has been transformed into one that loves what God loves and hates what God hates.

John 14:15

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Christ's statement is both a command and a diagnostic: commandment-keeping is the expression of love for Christ. The believer who keeps the commandments because they love Christ is obedient in the New Testament sense. The person who keeps the commandments because they believe it is the price of continued divine favor has made obedience a transaction — which is not love, and which the New Testament consistently resists.

7.2 The Spirit Enables What the Law Could Not

Romans 8:3--4

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Paul's statement is the definitive resolution of the law-grace question.

The law could not produce the righteousness it demanded, because the flesh could not sustain what the law required. God's solution was not to lower the requirement. It was to send his Son to condemn sin in the flesh and to send his Spirit to produce in the believer the righteousness the law always required but could never generate.

The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us — not by us in our own power, but in us through the Spirit's indwelling. The believer who walks after the Spirit is not a person who tries harder than the Old Covenant Israelite; he is a person who has a different nature, produced by the new birth, sustained by the indwelling Spirit, oriented toward God from within rather than constrained toward God from without. The obedience that flows from this nature is genuine and sustainable in a way that external legal compliance never was.

7.3 What Genuine Obedience Looks Like

Genuine covenant obedience — the obedience of response, not payment — has several consistent characteristics in the New Testament:

- It is comprehensive, not selective. The believer who obeys in the areas he finds comfortable and ignores the areas he finds costly has not obeyed; he has negotiated. Christ's lordship is not partial (Luke 6:46 — 'Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?').
- It is continuous, not occasional. The believer's relationship with God is not a series of transactions punctuated by periods of independence. It is a sustained walk — daily, moment by moment — in the Spirit and in the Word (Galatians 5:16, 25).
- It is humble, not self-congratulatory. The believer who has obeyed does not stand before God with a sense of having contributed something. He stands as the servant who has done what was required (Luke 17:10 — 'We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do').
- It is motivated by love, not fear. Perfect love casts out the fear that produces merely external compliance (1 John 4:18). The believer who obeys out of love for God obeys from the inside; the believer who obeys from fear of punishment alone obeys only as far as he believes he is being observed.

Chapter Eight: Objections, Technical Reference, and Study Guide

8.1 Objections

'Emphasizing Holiness Makes Christianity About Works'

OBJECTION:

"If you make holiness a requirement, you turn Christianity into a works-based religion. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9)."

ANSWER: Ephesians 2:8-9 is true and non-negotiable: salvation is by grace through faith, not by works. But verse 10 completes the thought: 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' The grace that saves produces the good works; it does not eliminate them.

Requiring holiness is not making salvation a works-based religion. It is insisting that genuine salvation produces a transformed life — which is what every New Testament author teaches. A salvation that produces no change in conduct is not the salvation of the New Testament. James states it directly: 'Faith without works is dead' (James 2:20). Paul states it: 'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid' (Romans 6:1-2). The requirement of holiness is not the addition of works to grace; it is the recognition that genuine grace always produces genuine transformation.

'Demanding Self-Examination Produces Legalism and Anxiety'

OBJECTION:

"Self-examination leads to an unhealthy preoccupation with one's own sin and performance. Christians should rest in assurance, not constantly scrutinize themselves."

ANSWER: The concern is legitimate but the conclusion is wrong. Self-examination done rightly does not produce morbid anxiety; it produces honest clarity. The problem is not self-examination but self-examination disconnected from the grace that addresses what examination reveals. Paul commands examination (2 Corinthians 13:5) and also provides the assurance that follows it: if our heart condemn us not, we have confidence toward God (1 John 3:21). The two belong together.

Refusing to examine oneself does not produce genuine rest; it produces false security. The person who never tests their faith against Scripture is not at peace; they are merely uninformed about their actual condition. True rest comes from the honest examination that finds, by God's grace, a genuine foundation — and from the honest examination that identifies what needs correction and finds grace sufficient to address it.

8.2 Greek Terms

Qodesh / Hagios (ῥτττ / ἅγττ) — holy, set apart, consecrated — applied to God: his absolute moral perfection and otherness; applied to the believer: the progressive conformity of character to that perfection

Hagiasmos (ἁγττμτ) — sanctification — the process and the state of being set apart for God; both positional (declared at new birth) and progressive (pursued throughout the Christian life)

Dioko (δττκω) — to pursue, to press after, to chase earnestly — used of holiness in Hebrews 12:14; the urgency of a hunter, not the casualness of a browser

Metamorphoo (μεταμορφτ) — to transform, to transfigure — used in Romans 12:2; a change of substance from within, not merely adjustment of surface behavior

Suschematizo (συσχηματίζω) — to conform, to be pressed into a mold — used in Romans 12:2 for conformity to the world; the shaping force of the surrounding culture on the unguarded believer

Me genoito (μὴ γένοιτο) — may it never be, God forbid — Paul's strongest negation; used in Romans 6:2 and Galatians 2:17 against antinomian and legalist errors respectively

Anomia (ἀνομία) — lawlessness, iniquity — the condition of those turned away in Matthew 7:23; not atheism but the life lived without covenant obedience despite religious activity

Peirazo (πειράζω) — to test, to examine — used in 2 Corinthians 13:5 for self-examination; an active, rigorous testing

Dokimazo (δοκιμάζω) — to prove by testing, to assay — used alongside peirazo in 2 Corinthians 13:5; the metallurgist's test by fire

8.3 Study Guide

Chapter One — The Standard

4. Why does Peter quote Leviticus 11:44 in a New Covenant epistle? What is he establishing about the relationship between Old and New Covenant holiness standards?
5. What does 2 Peter 1:4 ('partakers of the divine nature') mean? How does it relate to the indwelling of the Holy Ghost?
6. What changed about holiness at Pentecost? What did not change?
7. (Advanced) Ezekiel 36:27 says God will 'cause' the believer to walk in his statutes. What does the causative language tell us about the role of the Spirit in covenant obedience? How does this differ from the compulsion of external law?

Chapter Two — What Holiness Covers

8. Paul says in Ephesians 4:29 that speech should minister grace to the hearer. Apply this standard to three specific types of speech that are common in contemporary culture. How does each measure against Paul's standard?
9. What does it mean to 'bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ' (2 Corinthians 10:5)? Is this possible? By what means?
10. What is the difference between separation from the world and withdrawal from society? How does 2 Corinthians 6:17 define what separation requires?
11. (Advanced) Romans 12:1-2 uses *metamorphoo* for transformation and *uschematizo* for conformation. What is the difference between these two processes in practice? Give a concrete example of each operating in a believer's life.

Chapter Three — Progressive Sanctification

12. What is the difference between positional holiness and progressive sanctification? Use 1 Corinthians 6:11 and 2 Corinthians 7:1 in your answer.
13. Peter says in 2 Peter 1:9 that a person who lacks the growth virtues is 'blind' and has 'forgotten' their purging from sin. What does this tell us about the relationship between growth and gratitude?
14. The fruit of the Spirit is singular ('fruit,' not 'fruits'). What does the singular form tell us about how the Spirit's character is produced in the believer?
15. (Advanced) Is it possible for a Spirit-filled believer to produce the fruit of the Spirit through deliberate effort? How does the vine-and-branch image of John 15:1-5 address this question?

Chapter Four — Grace Does Not Cancel Holiness

16. What is the antinomian error? What is the legalist error? What does Paul say in response to each (Romans 6:1-2; Galatians 2:21)?
17. Titus 2:12 says grace 'teaches us.' What does it teach? What does this tell us about the nature of genuine grace?
18. How would you explain to someone who says 'I'm under grace, not law' the difference between the Old Covenant's external law and the New Covenant's Spirit-enabled obedience?
19. (Advanced) Romans 8:4 says the righteousness of the law is 'fulfilled in us' — not 'by us.' What is the significance of this preposition? How does it define the relationship between the Spirit's work and the believer's effort?

Chapter Five — The Danger of Self-Deception

20. What three features of Matthew 7:21-23 make it one of the most sobering passages in the New Testament?
21. Christ says 'I never knew you' — not 'I once knew you.' What does the word 'never' imply about the nature of the relationship these people believed they had?
22. How does Luke 11:35 ('Take heed that the light in thee be not darkness') describe the condition of the self-deceived person? Why is this condition more dangerous than simple ignorance?
23. (Advanced) The people in Matthew 7:22 performed works in Jesus' name. What does this tell us about the relationship between supernatural activity and genuine covenant standing? Can the two be separated?

Chapter Six — The Mandate of Self-Examination

24. What two Greek words does Paul use in 2 Corinthians 13:5? Define each one. What kind of examination do they together describe?

25. What are the four areas of self-examination identified in this chapter?
Which of them do you find most challenging and why?
26. How does 1 John 5:13 establish that self-examination can lead to assurance rather than anxiety?
27. (Advanced) Paul commands self-examination to a church — not to unbelievers. What does this tell us about the assumption that church membership or active participation in worship is equivalent to genuine covenant standing?

Chapter Seven — Obedience as Response

28. What is the difference between obedience as response to grace and obedience as payment for grace? How would you recognize each in a person's life?
29. Romans 8:4 says the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who walk after the Spirit, not the flesh. What is the practical difference between walking after the Spirit and walking after the flesh?
30. Luke 17:10 says that after doing all that is commanded, the servant is still unprofitable. What does this teach about the proper posture of the obedient believer before God?
31. (Advanced) John 14:15 connects love and commandment-keeping. How does this connection resolve the apparent tension between grace (which seems to require nothing) and commandment-keeping (which seems to require everything)?

A Closing Word: The Narrow Way

The road that leads to life is narrow, and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:14). The narrowness is not arbitrariness on God's part. It is precision. The road is exactly wide enough for the person who has repented, been baptized in Jesus' name, received the Holy Ghost, and is walking in the holiness that the Spirit enables and the covenant requires. Not wide enough for the person who has the right doctrine without the transformed life. Not wide enough for the person who has the transformed life without the right

foundation. Wide enough for the person who has both — foundation and walk, covenant entry and covenant living.

Self-examination is not the enemy of this walk. It is its guardian. The believer who examines himself honestly against the standard of Scripture, who finds what needs correcting and brings it to God in repentance, who finds what is genuinely present and gives God the glory for it — that believer is walking the narrow way with open eyes. That is not anxiety. That is wisdom.

Be holy. Examine yourself. Walk after the Spirit. The same God who called you to holiness has provided, through the Holy Ghost, everything needed to walk in it. The standard is his character. The power is his Spirit. The invitation is his grace. The covenant is his faithfulness.

The road is narrow. Walk it.

Hebrews 12:14

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Continue to Book Eight:

Church Order, Discipline, and Ministry Roles